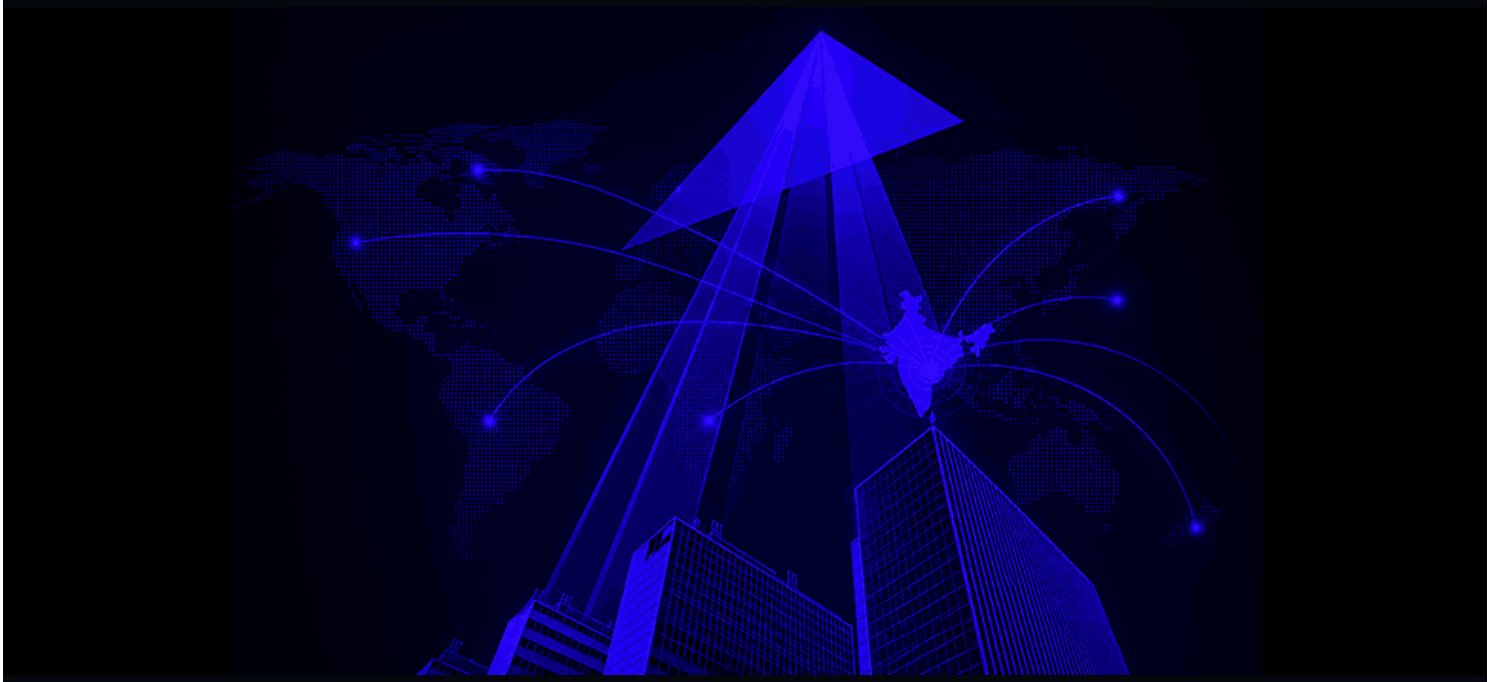
Beyond the India Advantage: What Enterprise Leaders Must Decide Before Setting Up a GCC in India



India has cemented its position as the world's preferred destination for Global Capability Centres. It is a market reality backed by scale, depth, and a maturing ecosystem that continues to attract enterprise investment from across sectors and geographies.

Over 2,100 GCCs now operate across the country. More than 506 Forbes Global 2000 companies have established a footprint here. Recently, the GCC leasing activity hit a record of 31 million square feet. The market, valued at an estimated $98.4 billion in FY2025–26, is growing at over 11% year-on-year, and the pace of new setups has not slowed.

Most enterprises have already answered the "Why India?" question. What remains is the more consequential one: **are we prepared to make the decisions that determine whether a GCC becomes a strategic asset or a missed opportunity?**

India's GCC Advantage: What Comes Next for Enterprise Leaders

The first generation of GCCs in India was driven largely by labour arbitrage. While cost efficiency remains relevant, today's leading enterprises view GCCs as strategic capability hubs supporting engineering, analytics, AI/ML, product development, finance, legal, and research functions.

As GCCs become more integral to enterprise growth, setup decisions carry greater strategic importance. Operating models influence scalability, governance shapes integration with global teams, and talent strategy determines the long-term value a GCC can create.

India offers access to a deep talent pool and a mature GCC ecosystem. The real question for enterprise leaders is how that access will be translated into sustainable capability and business impact.

Understanding the GCC Setup Journey

While every GCC follows a different path, most successful setups progress through a series of structured stages; from defining the business mandate and operating model to building talent, establishing governance, and achieving operational maturity.

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What Enterprise Leaders Must Decide Before GCC Setup

1. Define the Business Mandate

A GCC should be built around a clear business objective, not a generic goal of cost reduction or operational support. Enterprise leaders must determine which functions the centre will own, how success will be measured, and who is accountable for outcomes. A well-defined mandate creates alignment, accelerates decision-making, and establishes the foundation for long-term value creation.

2. Choose the Right Operating Model

The operating model will influence speed, control, risk, and scalability. Whether the enterprise adopts a BOO, BOT, or COPO structure, the decision should reflect its global operating maturity, growth ambitions, and appetite for local execution complexity. The right model is the one that supports strategic objectives; not simply the fastest path to launch.

3. Build a Talent Strategy, Not Just a Hiring Plan

India offers access to exceptional talent, but successful GCCs are built on deliberate capability planning. Leaders should define the leadership structure, critical skills roadmap, and workforce requirements needed to support the GCC's evolving mandate. Talent decisions made early often determine how quickly the centre can move beyond execution to innovation and strategic contribution.

4. Establish Governance from Day One

Strong governance connects the GCC to the broader enterprise. Clear reporting structures, decision rights, performance management frameworks, and collaboration models help ensure the centre operates as an integrated extension of the business rather than a standalone offshore function.

5. Align Investment with Long-Term Outcomes

A GCC is a long-term capability investment. Enterprises should align budgets, infrastructure, technology, and talent investments with the outcomes they expect the centre to deliver. The most successful GCCs are funded to build sustainable capabilities, not just achieve short-term cost efficiencies.

The common thread across all five decisions is readiness. India's GCC ecosystem has already proven its value. The greater determinant of success is whether the enterprise has the clarity, governance, and operating framework required to turn that opportunity into a scalable global capability.

Why Poor Setup Decisions Create Long-Term Complexity

The first year of a GCC often shapes its future. Decisions around operating models, leadership, governance, and investment frameworks are typically made early and can be difficult and costly to change later.

Enterprises that build successful, strategically integrated GCCs treat setup as a design decision rather than an administrative exercise. By investing upfront in operating model selection, governance, and talent strategy, they reduce the need for costly course corrections as the centre scales.

India provides access to exceptional talent and a mature GCC ecosystem. The quality of setup determines how much of that advantage translates into long-term business value.

Building the Right GCC Foundation from Day O

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IMS OneWorld works with enterprise leaders before critical setup decisions are made. From feasibility assessment and operating model design to entity setup, talent acquisition, governance, and scale, we enable enterprises build GCCs with long-term objectives in mind.

Our approach is grounded in a simple principle: decisions made during setup influence what a GCC can ultimately become. Combining deep local market expertise with execution capability, we help enterprises establish the right foundation from day one.

Conclusion

India has proven its position as a leading GCC destination. The more important question for enterprise leaders is whether the enterprise is prepared to build, govern, and scale effectively.

Success depends on deliberate decisions around mandate, operating model, governance, talent, and investment strategy. India provides the opportunity. The choices made during setup determine whether that opportunity becomes a strategic business asset.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a GCC in India?

A GCC is a captive centre established by a multinational company in India to deliver functions such as technology, finance, analytics, engineering, and operations.

What are the key decisions before setting up a GCC in India?

Key decisions include defining the business mandate, selecting the right operating model, building a talent strategy, establishing governance, and aligning investments with long-term objectives.

What is the right GCC operating model for my enterprise?

The right model depends on your strategic goals, operating maturity, and timeline. Common options include BOO, BOT, and COPO, each offering different levels of ownership, control, and partner involvement.

Why do GCC setups in India fail or underperform?

Most challenges stem from unclear objectives, unsuitable operating models, weak governance, or talent strategies focused on scale rather than capability.

How long does it take to set up a GCC in India?

Entity setup and initial hiring typically take 3–6 months, while achieving operational maturity usually requires 12–18 months.

What role does governance play in GCC success?

Governance ensures alignment between the GCC and the broader enterprise through clear decision-making, accountability, and integration with global teams.

How does IMS OneWorld support GCC setup in India?

IMS OneWorld helps enterprises design, establish, and scale GCCs through operating model selection, entity setup, talent strategy, governance design, and ongoing operational support.

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